THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY
1230 YORK AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021

JOSHUA LEDERBERG
PRESIDENT

April 9, 1979

Memorandum to all Faculty and Students

SEMINAR
ON
COMPARATIVE TOXICOLOGY

Scientific foundation for regulation and public policy in re drugs, food additives, environmental pollution radiation, toxic substances.....

On April 25 at 4:00 p.m., in Caspary 1A, we will hold the organizing session for a projected seminar on an important but poorly developed discipline that might be called 'comparative toxicology'. Innumerable and costly decisions and choices are made that are based on the extrapolation to people of risks inferred from studies of hazard in other species. The policy methods used in such choices are often defective, but so is the underlying scientific foundation. This seminar, although directed at improving our own, and public, insights in these choices, will be focussed more sharply on the scientific issues involved in the assessment of toxic risks in various species, and on how most validly to extrapolate these to the human. Involved is the reconstruction of toxicology as a convergence of biochemistry, physiology, pharmacology, pathology, epidemiology....but with particular emphasis on a comparative genetic and evolutionary perspective. Particular attention will be paid to critical experimental design in risk assessment, to pathophysiological mechanism, to intervening and interfering variables, and to a comparative genetic perspective.

In addition to student-initiated seminars that stress the critical scientific themes in the examination of particular cases, guest lectures might be sought, especially for the policy oriented uses of scientific insight.

The seminar is open to all interested students and faculty of the University, and its detailed organization will be the subject of the discussion on April 25. It is an extension of a course that I taught for many years at Stanford; but it should be attuned to the special interests and skills of the Rockefeller University community.

Joshua Lederberg